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NICK CARTER



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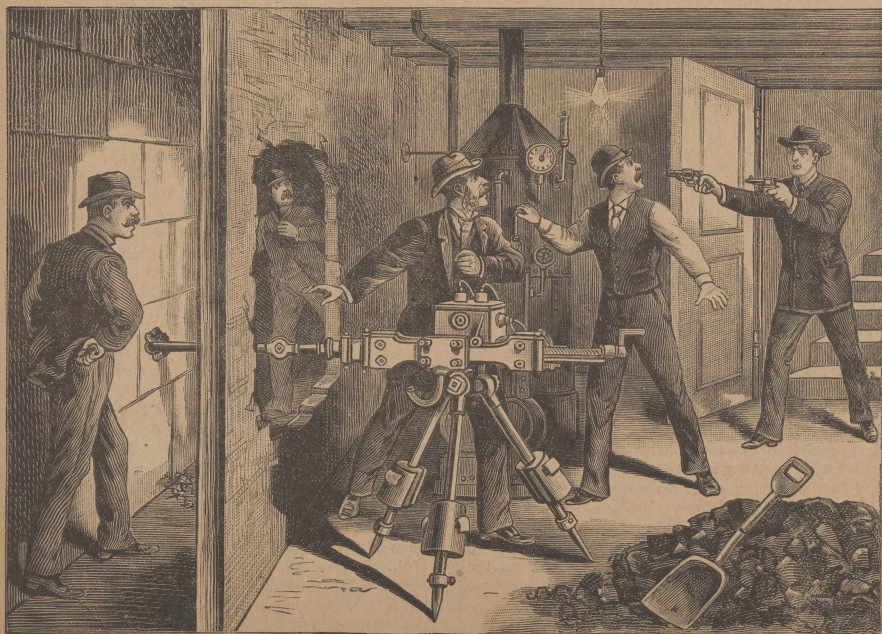
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THE ELECTRIC DRILL;

OR, NICK CARTER AMONG THE HIGH POWER BURGLARS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "NICK CARTER."



WITH A WEAPON IN EACH HAND, NICK CONFRONTED THE HIGH POWER BURGLARS. "SURRENDER!" HE SHOUTED.

THE ELECTRIC DRILL;

OR,

Nick Carter Among the High Power Burglars.

By the author of "NICK CARTER."

CHAPTER I.

A DARING SCHEME.

"Talk about nerve!"

"What is it now, Mr. Smith?"

"Burglars!"

"What, again?"

"Yes, last night, at my residence."

Mr. Chester Smith, the wealthy Chicago banker, threw himself into an easy-chair in the office of the Chief of Police of the World's Fair City, and looked decidedly ugly.

"What did they get?" asked the chief.

"I'd like to know what they didn't get," was the excited reply, "and I was at home every minute of the time, too."

"Well?"

There was a quiet smile on Major McClaughry's pleasant face as he sat looking at his excited friend.

"They entered my house while I was at home," continued the banker, "ransacked every room in it, took my watch and pocket-book from under my pillow, and my revolver from a table drawer near the bed."

"You were right in calling them nerry," said the chief.

"But that isn't half of it. They went from my room to the kitchen, and what do you think they did there?"

"Surely they didn't find much there."

"Well, they lit a fire and cooked breakfast. Then they went to the cellar and rapped my wine."

"And no one heard them?"

"Not a soul."

"Go on."

"Then they rigged themselves out in my clothes and put their own old duds in the clothes press. But the worst is yet to come, and for iridescent audacity, it breaks the record."

"Proceed."

"Last week I bought a bull-dog, whose sole duty it is to watch the premises. This morning I found him shut up in the coal-house, with a heavy rubber band around his jaws, and a tag tied to his tail. The tag reads as follows:

"We didn't take yer purp, 'cos we thought mebbe as how he was raised 'n' pet, an' you might be fond of him."

The chief laughed heartily for a moment, and then his face grew grave.

"We are having a great deal of trouble with burglars lately," he said, "and I am often at a loss what to do."

"And nearly all recent burglaries are unusually daring and successful, are they not?"

"They are all daring, and I am sorry to say that nearly all are successful."

"You'll have to call on Nick Carter again."

"I can't always get Nick Carter."

"Well, we ought to have a few men like Nick on the Chicago detective force."

The chief smiled.

"There is only one Nick Carter," he said.

The banker gave a few additional details regarding the burglary at his residence, and went away.

Had Chicago's well-known chief of police known what was at that moment going on in New York city, he would have been doubly anxious for the safety of the lives and property of Chicago bankers during the Fair.

Had Mr. Chester Smith known, he would have filled his bank with armed guards.

It was about nine o'clock in Chicago, and it was after ten in the great metropolis of the country.

In a handsomely-furnished room looking out on Broadway, not far from Thirtieth street three men were sitting over their morning cigars.

They were all handsome, well-preserved men, and all were dressed in business suits of the latest style and best material.

The man who appeared to be the host was a gentleman of refined appearance and manners.

He wore a long, drooping mustache and flowing side-whiskers of the Dundreary type, which gave him a mild and benevolent aspect.

John Gilmore was one of the great high-power burglars of the world, and his two companions, Henry Geary and Ike Grove, were nearly as well up in the business of burglary.

They had all served terms in State prisons, but they managed to keep outside of the walls, and have plenty of money, most of the time.

Burglary is a trade at the present day.

It has its tricks, its tools, and its ups and downs.

Like every trade, it is continually changing and improving.

Methods of high-class burglars that were in vogue twenty years ago are hardly known now.

Burglars used to meet in low basement saloons to concoct their schemes, but they now meet in grand hotels, perhaps next door to a great statesman, or a judge.

Under these circumstances, it is not strange that even the best officers are often at a loss how best to detect and punish the burglars of to-day.

"It strikes me," said Grove, as he stepped to the window and looked out upon busy Broadway, "that New York is good enough for me."

"Any scheme to work on?" asked Geary.

"Oh, there's a little bank up here in Harlem that I mean to give a little attention in a few days."

"How much is there in it?" asked Gilmore.

"Not very much," was the reply.

"Then come to Chicago with me," said Gilmore.

"To Chicago?"

Grove acted surprised.

"And why not?" demanded Gilmore.

"Why," was the reply, "all the bank-sneaks and pick-pockets and highwaymen in the world will be in Chicago from now until the end of the World's Fair. There will be no chance for a respectable bank-operator who knows his business."

"Bank operator is good," said Geary, with a laugh.

"It's all right," said Gilmore, "and just about expresses the kind of work we do."

"Have you any scheme on for Chicago?" asked Grove.

"I should say he had," observed Geary.

"Well, what is it? I can't make up my mind until I know something about it."

"It's the biggest scheme on earth," said Geary.

Gilmore hesitated.

"I don't think I'd better give all the details at this time," he said, after some thought, "but you shall know all about it in a few days."

"What's the nature of it?"

"Why," said Geary, "he's going to operate on the largest bank in Chicago with machinery."

"What kind of machinery?"

"Electric."

Grove laughed.

"Is he going to melt the vault?" he asked.

"No. He is going to bore it down with an electric drill."

"Well, I guess he's the man who can do it," said Grove, "and if there's enough money in the vault, I'm in for the scheme. How are you going to get your electric drill up to the vault without having all the policemen in Chicago on your neck?"

"I can't tell you now," said Gilmore, "but the scheme is well developed, and will be sure to prove a winner."

"Count me in."

The three plotters shook hands.

"When can you leave for Chicago?" asked Gilmore.

"Within an hour, if you think best," was the reply.

"All right; get ready."

Grove went to the door, opened it, and then turned back, holding the door half open, with the knob in his hand.

"You know all about that trouble of mine over in Brooklyn?" he asked.

"Yes. Shut the door."

But when people have only "one word" to say they seem to want the door open behind them, so the door was not closed.

In a moment the three men forgot all about its being open, and went on with their conversation.

"Well," continued Grove, "they are after me pretty hard, and it may be best not to come here again."

"That's good sense," said Gilmore, "where shall we meet?"

"At the room on Twenty-third street," was the reply. "After we get our electric drill working on the Chicago banks we won't have to be so mighty careful."

"Why not?"

"Oh, we'll have money enough to buy up all the policemen and detectives in the Windy City."

"I hope so."

For the second time Grove stepped out of the room, and for the second time he came back.

"What were we saying just now?" he asked.

He looked greatly excited.

"Why?"

Gilmore sprang to his feet and advanced to the door as he spoke.

"What's wrong?" he continued. "What do you want to stand there in that way for? The door is still open, you fool."

Grove stepped into the room and closed the door.

"What were we saying?" he repeated.

"Something about your Brooklyn scrape, and something about meeting at the Twenty-third street place."

"Anything about the electric drill?"

The three men looked at each other in dismay.

They could not remember whether the Chicago scheme had been mentioned while the door was open.

"I think it's all right," said Gilmore, at length, "but you must be more careful. Was there any one out there?"

"Yes."

"Listening?"

"I think so."

"Any one you ever saw before?"

"Yes: that's just it. The fellow, whoever it was, has been following me for two days."

"Shoot him."

"Show me a chance."

At that instant Gilmore looked up at the transom over the one entrance to the room.

He grew pale as death.

"There is your chance," he said. "Raise your eyes to the transom and shoot."

Grove drew his revolver and brought it in line with the place indicated by his excited companion.

There was no one there.

"You must be crazy," he said, turning to Gilmore.

Then they all heard some one land lightly on the floor of the hall outside.

"He has dropped down."

"Open the door and shoot."

"Quick!"

When the door was opened, there was no one there.

The three men rushed through the halls for a moment, and then turned to the outside window, in order to see if any stranger passed out of the main entrance below.

"Shoot," said Gilmore, as a man passed out. "It's Nick Carter."

Grove fired, and the man who had been pointed out fell to the walk.

CHAPTER II.

CHICK MAKES A SCENE.

The man saw that he was being followed by several villainous-looking fellows, and started off on a run.

It was eight o'clock in Chicago, and John Mitchell was going to his residence on Boston avenue.

It was quite dark, but Mitchell could see the men plainly every time they came to a street lamp.

As long as he kept on Desplaines street they did not crowd him hard, but when he turned into Boston avenue they closed in.

He started to run.

They did the same.

At last he came to the steps of his own residence.

Then the toughs seemed to understand that they were likely to lose their prey, and one of them darted forward and dealt him a stunning blow on the side of the head.

When Mitchell fell, he went through the door of his home, and landed in the hall-way.

He was partially stunned, but grappled with his assailant.

The struggle which followed attracted the attention of two men who resided in the family.

But the highwayman was a desperate fellow, and seemed to be fighting for his life.

With the full weight of the three men upon him, he still struggled to his feet, shaking the men from his back as a huge dog throws off water.

Then he made for the door. His companions had disappeared, and the patrolman on the beat had been attracted to the spot by the noise of the combat.

The robber sprang past the officer and went panting and swearing up a dark alley.

Pursuit soon died out, and the fellow stopped to rest in the shelter of a cluster of stables.

His clothes were of the cheapest, and were badly worn.

His broken shoes were soaked with mud and water, and his rimless hat afforded little protection from the weather.

When, occasionally, the light of a street lamp shone upon him, it revealed a countenance haggard and worn, but it was a face from which the evil look never departed.

In all the city of Chicago that night there was probably no more piteous object than the defeated robber shivering in the shelter of the stables near Desplaines street.

At length he started on again and slunk through the Washington street tunnel to the South Side.

Dodging here and there through the semi-deserted streets in the banking and real estate district—for it was now after ten o'clock—the fugitive at length entered a prosperous-looking oyster and chop house and asked for the proprietor.

The waiter looked at the disreputable figure in amazement for a moment, and then pointed toward the door.

Then a handsomely-dressed fellow with a long, drooping mustache and flowing side-whiskers of the Dundreary type, stepped into the room.

A signal passed between the robber and the keeper of the restaurant, and the two men were soon closeted in a private room.

As soon as the door was closed the proprietor sprang fiercely at his companion.

"What in the name of all that is evil and unlucky brings you here in this plight?" he demanded.

Grove threw himself sullenly into a chair, paying no attention to the angry demonstrations of his old-time pal.

"I had no other place to go," he said, shortly.

"Where have you been since that day on Broadway, when you came so near killing Nick Carter?"

"I have been at Sing Sing. I escaped from that accursed place only a few days ago."

"He caught you, then?" demanded the proprietor.

"Yes, he caught me," was the reply. "The next time I get a shot at him he won't be so lucky."

The restaurant man walked up and down the floor for a moment with a heavy frown on his face.

"How do you know he did not follow you here?" he finally asked.

"I saw him last at Detroit," was the calm reply.

"Then you think he is after you?"

"I am certain of it."

"And yet you come here?"

"I told you before that I had no other place to go."

"I'll murder you if he follows you to my place."

"You seem to be doing pretty well here," said Grove.

"No man with my police record can do well anywhere," was the angry answer.

"I noticed a bank next door," said Grove. "I presume this place is a starter for the electric drill scheme."

"It is nothing of the sort," said Gilmore. "I have decided to have nothing to do with that scheme."

"It is strange that you should locate a place like this—next door to a bank, then. There can't be much money in the trade you get here."

"There is money enough here if the bums and sneaks of the profession would only let me alone."

Grove sprang to his feet.

"Another word like that," he shouted, "and I'll give

you dead away to the police. You have no holler coming against me."

"But suppose Nick Carter follows you here, and recognizes me?"

"Have you any idea that Nick Carter knows where you are?"

"I don't think he does."

"You are mistaken."

"Then we must get rid of him in some way."

"We tried that in New York."

"You mean that you tried it."

"Who told me to shoot?"

"I did, but I didn't tell you to miss him."

"I didn't miss him."

"Well, he got over his wound in a week."

"Curse Nick Carter. Give me some money. I need a complete outfit, and something to buy food and drink with."

"Especially drink," said Gilmore, scornfully.

"You would drink yourself were you in my place," said Grove. "Give me some money, and you'll see what I'll make of myself in a week's time."

"I won't give you a cent."

Grove started for the door.

"Where are you going?" demanded Gilmore.

"To the police."

Gilmore opened the door.

"I don't care how quick you go," he said. "You can't touch me."

As Grove stepped out, a waiter walked up to the door of the room.

"Did you ring?" he asked.

Gilmore turned him away with an oath, and pulled Grove back into the room.

"You see how it is," he said.

"See how what is?"

"That is a detective. It may be Nick Carter for all I know."

"Who hired him?"

"I did."

"Knowing him to be a detective?"

"Of course not. I found that out just now."

"How?"

"By his coming here and asking that question."

"I don't understand."

"There is no bell to this room. He came here for the purpose of spotting you."

Grove threw himself back into his chair with a fearful oath.

"We can't afford to quarrel," he said, "if that is Nick Carter, or one of his assistants."

"He has only two assistants, I think, and one of them is a girl."

"And the other?"

"Is Chick."

Grove pondered for some moments.

"Help me out," he said, "and I'll help you to get rid of the fellow. Then we can put up the electric drill burglary, and make enough money to get out of the country."

"How did Nick capture you after you shot him that day, and ran down the back stairs?" Gilmore asked.

He was not quite sure that Grove meant to be square with him or that he was capable of helping him, even if so inclined.

Still, he was there to accomplish the electric drill burglary, and he wanted more trained help than he had.

"He chased me, wounded as he was, like a blood-hound for three days, and finally got me, after a fight, at Albany."

"And you went to prison without implicating me in any way with the shooting, and without mentioning the electric drill scheme?"

"I did all that. Don't it prove to you that I am square?"

"Have you tried to turn any tricks since you came here?"

Grove hesitated.

He wanted to be square with Gilmore, and yet he disliked to mention the incident on Boston avenue.

"At last, however, he explained just what had taken place, and was roundly cursed by Gilmore for coming to his place after having attempted so daring a crime.

But the incident was what saved Grove, after all.

"You will be sure to be tracked," Gilmore said, "if you remain in your present condition, and that will endanger my place. How much cash do you want to fix yourself up with? You may have your meals and drink here so long as you behave yourself."

"Fifty dollars."

"And you will help me to get rid of these people, and also assist in the electric drill scheme?"

"So you are into that, after all?" said Grove. "I thought so all the time. Yes, I will help you all I can in both directions if you stake me now."

Gilmore counted out the sum named, and handed it to his companion.

"Now," said Grove, "tell me about this electric drill scheme, so I can be thinking it over."

Gilmore took a folded paper from his pocket-book and spread it out on the table. It was nothing more nor less than a carefully-drawn plan of the buildings surrounding the bank which adjoined the restaurant.

"Here is the bank vault," explained Gilmore, "and here is my place. The plan is to break through the cellar wall under this floor, and cut through the granite and steel walls of the bank with an electric drill. It can be done in two hours."

"But won't you strike too low in the vault?"

"No. The vault is two feet lower than the floor of the bank above, and we shall strike it just about right."

"Where does your power come from?"

"Oh, I put in a patent electric motor for a dish washer, and contracted for electric fly fans for next summer. So that is all right."

Grove laughed heartily, and declared that it was a great scheme.

While the men were figuring over the plan, the sound of breaking crockery came from the front end of the place.

They both dashed out, for it was quite evident that there was serious trouble in the main dining-room.

"One of the waiters threw a server of dishes at a customer," explained an employee.

"Where is that waiter?" thundered Gilmore. "I'll take care of him."

"I don't know, sir," was the reply. "He was here a moment ago."

"Where is the customer?"

"There on the floor, sir. He was knocked down."

The proprietor stepped forward and lifted the fallen man's head.

It was Geary, his partner in the electric drill scheme.

"They had some words, sir," continued the waiter, "and the customer tried to grab the waiter."

Geary was revived, and the three men went back to the private room together. There a new surprise awaited them.

The plan they had been examining was not there, although Gilmore and Grove had left it on the table when they rushed out.

There was a movement by the door, and Geary turned to see the man who had struck him stealing out of the room.

"There's that detective again," he yelled. "Grab him!"

"Don't allow him to escape," roared Gilmore. "He has the missing paper. Shoot him down."

The proprietor drew a revolver as he spoke, but Geary caught his hand in time to prevent the shot.

"Do you want the police down here?" he said, with an oath.

"I don't want him to escape," said Gilmore, making a dive for the young man who was just passing out of the door-way.

The burglar was a powerful man, but he was little more than a baby in the hands of the man he sought to detain.

He was whirled from his feet in an instant, and thrown against his two companions, who were now advancing to assist him.

Before the three men could do anything more to keep

the young man in the room he had closed the door with a bang, and darted through the restaurant to the street.

When Gilmore opened the door the fugitive was out of sight.

"Why didn't you catch him?" demanded the proprietor. "The man is a thief, and the racket out here was nothing but a scheme to steal some private papers from my room."

"He went through like a flash," explained the cashier.

"Nixon followed him," replied a waiter.

"I am glad that one employee has some sense," growled Gilmore. "When Nixon comes back send him to my room."

Nixon was an old crook who had been brought on from New York to keep track of things in the restaurant.

"I told you he was a detective, didn't I?" demanded Gilmore of Grove, as soon as the door of the private room was closed.

"How did you know that?" asked Geary.

"Because he stood in front of the door when I opened it a few minutes ago. Then, to account for his presence there, he asked if I had rung for him."

"Well?"

"Well, there is no bell in the room. He was there listening."

"I spotted him when I came in to-night," said Geary, "and accused him of trying to pick my pocket. He threw the dishes at me, and I made a grab for him. That's all I know about it. He strikes a hard blow, whoever he is."

"How long has he been here?" asked Grove.

"Only two days," was the reply.

"Then he followed me here, and spotted this place the first thing, knowing that I would be likely to come here," said Grove.

"But what did he dodge into the room for as soon as we left it?"

"To find out what we were up to, and he found out, too."

"I don't know about that," said Gilmore, lifting a piece of paper from the floor as he spoke.

The paper was the missing plan, which the intruder had undoubtedly dropped in the scuffle.

"So the electric drill scheme is safe, for the present, at least," said Grove, "but there is no knowing how long it will remain so, for the man just in here was Chick, Nick Carter's assistant."

"Then you make a skip," said Geary, "and don't come here again. We can communicate by letter."

Grove did not move, but stood pointing toward the now open door.

CHAPTER III.

A HOT FIGHT IN THE CHOP HOUSE.

"Hello! What's up now?"

Nick Carter, sitting in his room at the Windsor Hotel, on Dearborn street, looked up with a smile, as Chick rushed into the room and hastened to the window.

"Nothing special."

Chick peered carefully through the blinds as he spoke.

"I'm glad you came in early to-night," said Nick, "for I am feeling a trifle annoyed."

"About what?"

"It's taking altogether too much time to run this man Grove down."

Chick turned out the gas, threw the window blinds wide open, and sat down in front of the window.

"You never told me," he said, after a pause, "why you left better cases in New York to follow this man—a mere escaped convict. It seems rather strange to me."

"The man Grove," replied the detective, "is one of the cutest and most daring bank robbers in the world. The bankers of America are never at ease when he is out of prison."

"And it is through the solicitations of the bankers that you are trying to return him to Sing Sing?"

"In a measure—yes."

"Then you have another reason?"

"Yes; he has twice attempted my life. You know

what shape I was in when I followed him from Broadway to Albany, and what a desperate fight I had with him." "You came near getting him in that room on Broadway."

"If I had stepped into that room then," said Nick, "my life would not have been worth a cent. When Grove, Gilmore and Geary—the three G's, as the boys call them—when they get together, it means fight."

"And they were all there, then?"

"Yes, planning something which I could not overhear. I went down after assistance, and Grove shot me from the window."

"And you captured him in Albany and sent him up for twenty years, and he escaped. Well, the three G's are together again."

"What! Have you seen him—Grove, I mean?"

"He is there at the Gilmore chop house."

Chick then explained all that had taken place in the restaurant that evening.

"And what was the paper you got hold of in the room?" asked Nick.

"That's just what I'd like to know. You see I dropped it in the scuffle before I had a chance to look at it."

"What did it look like?"

"It was a drawing of some kind."

Nick pondered a moment.

"I'm sorry," he said, "that there are no charges against Gilmore and Geary. I'd run the whole gang in to-night."

"Were they acquitted when last arrested?"

"Yes; by perjury."

"Well, there will soon be a charge against them," said Chick.

"What do you mean?"

"The paper I found on the table was a drawing of some kind."

"You said that before."

"Yes, and that Gilmore chop house is next door to a bank. Do you begin to catch on?"

"I was wondering if you had the same idea as myself," said Nick. "I see you have. What are you looking at out there?"

Chick pointed across the street.

"Do you see that man standing there by the cigar store?" he asked.

"Certainly."

"Well, that's the man who followed me from the chop house."

"You know who it is, of course?"

"No," said Chick, with a laugh, "my acquaintance with crooks is not so extensive as is that of my chief."

"Well, it's Nixon, the all-around crook from New York," replied the detective. "I wonder what he's up to now?"

This last remark was caused by Nixon stepping out on the walk and stopping two men who were passing.

"They're a tough looking pair," said Chick, "and he seems to be well acquainted with them. I believe they are going away together."

Instead of starting away, however, the three men stepped into the cigar store and stood there by the counter, Nixon never taking his eyes from the door-way through which Chick had entered the hotel.

Nick began to change his clothes.

In about five minutes he looked like the prosperous advance agent of a negro minstrel company—one of the fellows who always talk show, no matter were they are, and who want everybody with whom they come in contact to know that they belong to the "perfesh."

"How's this?" he asked. "This will be apt to take down there in the chop house, won't it?"

"I should say so. Shall I go along?"

"Not with me, and not in that rig," was the reply, and the next moment the detective was on his way across the street to the cigar store, having left the hotel by a side entrance.

It took but a moment for Nick to get into conversation with Nixon, for the crook was partial to the "perfesh," and Nick declared on entering the cigar store that there wasn't a decent chop house in the whole city of Chicago.

The two toughs stepped back, and the detective and Nixon were soon on their way to the restaurant.

The first thing Nick saw on entering the place was the open door of the private room.

Grove stood there pointing out.

Behind him were Gilmore and Geary.

"There comes Nixon now," Nick heard Grove say, "and we may as well see what he has to say."

Nick seated himself at a table and ordered a chop, and Nixon went back to the private room.

In a moment the two men who had left Nixon at the cigar store entered the place and sat down at the rear table.

The waiter seemed to know them, for he went back and opened a conversation with them.

Nick could not hear what they were saying, for the distance was too great, but he could now and then catch a word.

The men were talking of highway robbery and burglary.

"Gilmore ought to know better than to harbor a lot of cheap thieves like those fellows," thought the detective. "They'll be sure to give his place away in the end."

In a few moments Nixon joined the two men, and then the waiter went away.

"I tell you it's a sure thing," Nick heard Nixon say, "for he's up there at the Windsor Hotel."

"How you goin' ter git 'im out?" demanded one of the men.

"That's easy enough," was the reply, and then the men talked in whispers again.

The detective laughed softly to himself.

"They'll have a nice job coaxing Chick to come out and be killed," he thought. "I wonder what Gilmore, Grove, and Geary are doing in that private room all this time?"

Presently, a muscular looking young fellow entered the room and seated himself at a table not far from that occupied by Nick.

His oily trousers were thrust into the tops of a pair of heavy, unpolished boots, and he wore a baggy blue woollen shirt under his rough coat, which smelled of machine oil. No vest or suspenders were in sight, and his closely-cropped head was covered with a greasy felt hat.

He looked like an iron-worker out for a midnight lunch.

He ordered a light meal and took out a huge roll of bills, as if to pay for it in advance.

Nick saw Nixon watching the money enviously.

"Now there'll be a picnic," he thought, wondering how the attempt to rob the young mechanic would be made.

He did not think Gilmore would allow any work of the kind on the premises, for it would be certain to become known, and would direct the attention of the police to the place, a thing which the burglar could by no means afford to have done.

Nick's chop was finished by this time, but he ordered a cup of coffee and a cigar, and sat there smoking and waiting.

Before long one of the toughs walked over to where the young mechanic was sitting.

"I've just been strikin' de boss for a lunch," he said, with a grin, "an' I couldn't make it stick. Can't you help me out?"

The mechanic motioned the bum to take a chair, and beckoned to a waiter.

"Fill him up," he said, shortly.

Nick started at the sound of his voice, and then a pleased smile crept over his face.

In a moment the seeming mechanic took out his money again to pay for what the tough had ordered.

The tough sprang from his chair and made a grab for the roll of bills.

The next moment he was one of the most surprised men in Chicago.

His hand did not get within a foot of the coveted prize. His intended victim had been expecting just such a move.

As the tough leaned forward he caught the other's right square on the throat, and went down to the floor like a log.

The mechanic went on eating his lunch.

But the affair was not to be allowed to pass off so quietly.

The fallen man's companion, Nixon, and three or four waiters made for the seeming mechanic, and in a moment all was confusion.

The young fellow put up a hot fight, and the chop house people were sent tumbling around on the floor in great shape.

Nick watched the battle curiously for a moment, and then sprang to his feet with an exclamation of anger.

There were five to one, and yet the waiters were arming themselves with clubs and meat cleavers.

The detective reached the scene just in time.

A cowardly waiter was aiming a blow at the seeming mechanic from behind, which would have ended the fight right there.

He was not striking with his fist, but held a heavy hatchet in his hand.

Without saying a word, Nick struck out with his right, and the waiter went half way over a table before he fell.

The dishes with which the table had been loaded struck the floor about the time the waiter did, and there was a great crash as the fellow floundered around among the damaged crockery.

The door of the private room was now opened, and the three high-power burglars, who had been perfecting their schemes there, rushed out.

Nixon and his gang drew back, leaving Nick and the seeming mechanic standing by the overturned table.

Gilmore dashed forward and seized the young man by the collar.

"You'll go over the road for this," he shouted.

The young fellow threw out his hip and caught the burglar around the body.

It was a pretty case of hip-lock, and Gilmore carried another table to the floor when he went down.

"It's a conspiracy to rob the place," cried Geary. "Throw them out and call the police."

But the employees had had enough of trying to throw the two men out of the place, and they held back.

Geary began pounding on the floor of the room.

"That's a signal," whispered Nick to the seeming mechanic. "If a door leading into the cellar is opened now, get down there if you can, while I amuse the people up here."

"All right," replied Chick, "but you ought to be getting out before long. They'll suspect it's a scheme."

Gilmore arose from the floor, brushing milk, butter and sugar from his clothing, and started for the door.

"This is no chance fight," he shouted. "These men came here on purpose to get up a row."

"You are a liar," said Chick, coolly, "one of your toughs tried to rob me, and this gentleman came to my assistance."

Before Gilmore could reply, a back door was opened, and three hard looking men rushed into the room.

"There comes the men who are putting in the electric drill machinery," whispered Nick. "Now look out for hot work."

The two detectives moved toward the door, but the gang closed in upon them, and they saw that it was not the intention to allow them to leave the place alive.

CHAPTER IV.

BEHIND THE BROKEN WALL.

"And I tell you they were both detectives."

"You are crazy on the subject of detectives."

Gilmore sprang to his feet with an oath and pointed around the room.

"You'll soon be telling me that no damage has been done here," he said, "and that the hot fight those fellows put up was all by way of amusement."

"And you'll be telling me," said Geary, "that the advance agent brought in was Nick Carter, and that the mechanic was Chick."

"That's about the size of it."

Geary laughed long and heartily.

The men were still in the chop house.

The large dining-room still showed that a desperate fight had taken place there, for the floor was covered with broken dishes.

The waiters and cooks had taken their departure for the night, and Grove and Nixon had gone out on an errand.

"What strikes me as peculiar," said Geary, "is the way the fellows got out of the place."

"The men you named a moment ago have a way of doing such things," replied Gilmore.

"I stood right there by the stairs," said Geary, "and I'll take my oath that only one of them went out in that rush."

"Which one?"

"The advance agent."

"Then where did the other one go?"

"I give it up."

"I'm afraid the electric drill scheme is busted," said Gilmore. "If the detectives are onto us, we certainly can't carry out the plans made in New York."

"But there are three million dollars in that bank vault."

"If we can't get them out they may as well be in India."

"We must get them out."

"How?"

"By the old plan."

"With those fellows watching us?" sneered Gilmore.

"I wish Grove had never got out of Sing Sing."

"What's he got to do with it?"

"The detectives followed him here."

"They have known where we were all the time," said Grove, "and would have pulled us in long ago if they had been in possession of a warrant of any kind."

"Have you any idea they are watching the drill scheme?" questioned Gilmore, anxiously.

"How could they be?"

"There is no knowing what those fellows will find out."

"The drill scheme is all right, notwithstanding what took place here to-night," said Geary. "How much money have we?"

"Mighty little. Grove pulled out fifty to-night."

"Then he must earn some and replace it."

"How can he earn money?"

"In the old way, of course."

"Burglary?"

"Of course."

"But will he do it?" asked Gilmore.

"Of course he will. Didn't he try to hold a man up in his own house to-night?"

"All right, then, just put him onto that South Side scheme."

During the short silence that followed the sound of a scuffle came from beyond the door leading to the cellar.

Then there was a faint cry, and all was still.

Geary started to his feet, and turned pale.

"What was that?" he asked.

Gilmore walked to the door and swung it open.

There was the dark staircase leading to the equally dark cellar below, and nothing else.

The two men looked tremblingly in each other's face for a moment. They were both longing, yet fearing, to ask the same question.

Finally, Gilmore spoke.

"Can it be possible," he asked, "that one of those fellows got down there during the fight?"

"It is possible," replied Geary. "Get a candle and we'll go down and look the place over."

In the cellar everything looked as usual.

There was the double partition which had been built to shut the noise of the motor and the drill from the street, there were tools, pipes, and iron bands lying around, and there, just beyond the broken cellar wall, was the heavy granite foundation of the bank vault.

The two men searched through every inch of the place, and then turned to the double wall.

"There is a door through here somewhere," said Gilmore.

"Yes," was the reply, "but it fastens from the other side as well as this, and we can never get through without breaking it down."

"Well, if we can't get through, no one else can, that is

one sure thing," replied Gilmore. "It must have been the rats we heard."

"Help! Help!"

The men were about to ascend the stairs to the room above when the cry reached their ears.

They drew their revolvers and stepped back.

Again the place was still.

There was no motion anywhere in the cellar.

"The place is haunted," whispered Geary.

"I shall be glad if it turns out to be ghosts," was the reply.

While the men waited and listened, the sound of blows and low-muttered curses came from the other side of the double partition.

"One of those detectives did get down here," said Gilmore. "If he gets out there is an end of our scheme and all the money we have put into it."

"You stay here," whispered Geary, "and I'll go around in front and get into the other room that way."

"Well, hurry."

Geary darted away, and Gilmore stood watching the door.

Then the latter heard steps and voices in the dining-room above, and for a single instant left his post of duty.

As he crept to the head of the stairs to look into the dining-room, he thought he heard the creaking of a door behind him, and stopped to listen.

The noise was not repeated, and he went on.

Had he returned to the cellar at that instant, he would have found the door in the double partition wide open.

He would have seen the body of one of his pals lying for an instant on the narrow threshold.

He would have seen the body drawn through into the rear basement, and the door softly closed and fastened.

He would have seen a dark figure in the dress of an iron-worker lift the body and carry it through the broken cellar wall.

Then he would have seen the two figures, one always carrying the other through the almost pitchy darkness, hiding in a corner near the granite wall of the bank vault.

But he saw nothing of this.

He went on up the staircase and stood for a moment on the last step.

Grove and Nixon had returned, and were walking about the place.

The former had somewhere procured a new suit of clothes, and looked quite respectable.

"What's up here?" he demanded. "Where's Gilmore?"

"Here," called that gentleman from the head of the stairs. "Did you see Geary as you came in?"

"Yes. What's he rushing around in that way for? Anything wrong?"

"I should say so. Come into the cellar. Turn the key in the front door first."

Grove did as requested, and then all three men hastened down the cellar stairs.

"Hello, there!"

It was Geary, calling from the other side of the double wall.

"Well?"

"Everything all right there?"

"Yes."

"It's O. K. here. I wonder what it was we heard?"

As he spoke, Geary placed his hand on the fastening of the door and opened it.

"It wasn't fastened on this side," he said, stepping through.

"It was on this side, though," replied Gilmore, "so everything must be all right after all."

"Did you look in the space around the vault?"

"Yes; don't you remember going in there with me?"

"Of course. Then the noise we heard must have been out on the street, or in some adjoining cellar."

"I suppose so," replied Gilmore.

Then he turned to Grove.

"Did you find out about that place?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Can you work it?"

"Yes, but it must be done to-night, and I must have help."

The four desperate men sat down to plan a burglary.

CHAPTER V.

NICK GETS INTO THE WRONG FLAT.

It was long past midnight, and a slow winter rain was falling.

Shivering with the cold, and muttering imprecations against the weather, Grove and Nixon left the shelter of the chop house and walked rapidly toward Wabash avenue.

"We ought to have been out an hour ago," muttered the former, "then we shouldn't have missed the cab."

"The owl car's all right for a job like this," was the sullen reply. "You'll be wanting a hack next."

"Why not take a hack down as far as Thirty-ninth street?" demanded Grove. "It will be daylight before we get there at this rate."

"Have you the price?"

"Of course."

"Then call a cab."

In a moment the two men, fairly well housed from the storm, were whirling southward.

"Who first got onto this plant?" asked Grove, as they rode along.

"Gilmore."

"He's a cute one."

"You bet he is."

Nixon did not seem disposed to talk.

"How much is there of it?" asked Grove.

"About five thousand dollars, besides the jewelry."

"The fellow's a fool to keep so much stuff in his room."

"He is all of that."

"And you know the plan of the building well?"

"I was there to-day."

"And the old man sleeps alone on the third floor, away from the rest of the family?"

"That's what I said."

"Well, you needn't be so mighty short about it. Do you want to go in and get the stuff while I watch outside, or shall I go in?"

"Gilmore arranged for you to go in."

"All right."

"And there is to be no slugging."

"Suppose he wakes up and kicks?"

"Snatch all there is in sight, and cut your lucky."

"I guess I'll run the job in my own way," growled Grove. "I was in the business when Gilmore was working on a farm."

"Suit yourself."

The men were so busy talking, and the night was so dark and rainy, that they did not notice that one cab passed them several times, went on south for a block or two on each occasion, and then turned north again.

The man seated in the cab strained his ears each time in the endeavor to hear what the men in the other vehicle were saying, but he could only catch a word now and then.

The pursuing cab finally fell in behind the other, and the two vehicles proceeded together at a fast trot toward Thirty-ninth street.

There Grove and Nixon got out, and without once looking around to see if they were followed, walked rapidly toward Forty-third street.

The man in the second cab never lost sight of them.

He, too, left his cab at Thirty-ninth street and walked south.

About half-way between Cottage Grove avenue and the Illinois Central railway tracks Grove and Nixon stopped and slunk into a stair-way.

Their "shadow" was not twenty feet behind them.

While they consulted together he passed the spot where they stood, and entered the next stair-way to the east.

The apartments in the row—an entire block in length—were all exactly alike.

There were three flats in each division, and each flat had seven rooms.

There were in each one a front and a back parlor, a dining-room, a kitchen, a bedroom off the front parlor, one off the kitchen, and a bath-room off from the hall leading to the kitchen.

In each instance the back parlor and the bath-room were

lighted by an air shaft running from the first floor to the roof.

The men talked for some time in the hall-way, and Nick, for it was he, at last succeeded in getting near enough to hear what they were saying.

"He sleeps in the back parlor, on the second floor," Nixon was saying, "and he always leaves his watch and diamonds on the dresser and places the money under his pillow."

"Give me the key."

Nick heard a jingle of keys, and then Nixon said:

"His son sleeps in the hall bedroom. Don't make any noise at the door. When you get the stuff make a run for it if there is any kick made."

Nick darted away, and entering the next stair-way ascended to the second floor.

Here he rapped softly on the door leading into the flat on the right of the hall.

In a moment the door was opened about an inch.

"What do you want?" demanded a gruff voice.

"Are you alone in the room?"

"Yes, but I have a good gun with me. Keep away."

"You'll do," said Nick, with a laugh. "You won't get scared if I tell you something?"

"I hope not."

"Well, they are burglarizing the flat opposite, and I want to get where I can see what's going on, and make an arrest when the time comes."

"Who are you?"

"An officer."

The fellow was becoming more and more suspicious, and Nick was becoming more and more impatient.

"Will you let me in?" Nick finally asked.

"I don't believe you are an officer," was the reply. "If the flat over there is being robbed you must be in with it."

"In that case I wouldn't be likely to be here telling you about it, would I?"

"That's very true, unless you mean to rob this flat, too."

The fellow finally opened the door, and Nick stepped through the back parlor, passed into the hall leading to the kitchen, and entered the bath-room, from which a full view of the flat across the way could be had.

There was no light in the place, except such as crept in from the street lamps, but this was enough to show the detective that the man who had admitted him was dressed from head to foot, even to his collar and necktie.

"This is a strange time of night for a man to be sitting all dressed in a dark room," thought the detective. "Perhaps I have come to the wrong place for help in capturing these burglars."

Nick stood looking across the air shaft to the window of the back parlor opposite, but there was nothing to be seen there.

The window shades were drawn, and there was no sound of life in the dark space beyond them.

Then the detective heard a voice at his elbow:

"What are you doing?"

Nick did not like the fellow's tone.

"Waiting," he replied, shortly.

"You can't wait much longer in my rooms."

"Why not?"

"I want to go to bed."

"With your clothes on?"

The fellow muttered something, and struck a match.

"What are you going to do?" asked Nick.

"Light the gas."

The detective stepped forward, and extinguished the flame of the match.

"Don't do that," he said. "You will only warn the men who are on their way into the next flat."

"What do I care about the next flat? I don't believe there are any burglars about, anyway."

Nick thought that the fellow spoke unnecessarily loud. He did not like the way he crowded against him.

There was still no light or motion from across the air shaft.

The detective, standing with one hand resting on the window ledge, felt his fingers come in contact with some metallic substance.

He picked it up, and tried to discover its nature by the sense of feeling.

But that was a hard thing to do.

He could hear the occupant of the flat moving away toward the windows facing on Forty-third street, and, in a moment, lit a match.

The thing he held in his hand was evidently a revolving armature, and in one end was a "chuck" into which a diamond pointed drill could be fitted.

Nick slipped the article into his pocket, and turned away from the bath-room window.

"There is no use in staying here," he thought, "for the burglary was probably planned in this room. I was a fool to come in here looking for help."

He had no doubt that the burglars had in some way been warned before he was well in the rooms.

"Where are you going?"

The occupant asked the question as Nick reached the door.

"Going home."

"Not yet."

There was a tone of triumph in the fellow's voice.

"And why not?"

"I want to know who you are, and why you came here with such a story at this time of night."

Nick was about to brush past the fellow and pass on down stairs, when a low cry came from the direction of the bath-room.

He placed his hand on his weapon and hastened back.

The occupant of the flat kept close to his heels.

"You seem to have changed your mind," he said, with a sneering laugh.

For a single instant the bath-room was flooded with light.

The window shades across the air shaft were up, and the gas in the back parlor of the opposite flat was burning brightly.

The detective saw a white-haired man sitting up in bed with a look of terror on his wrinkled face.

In front of the bed stood a masked man, holding a revolver within an inch of the old man's forehead.

By the side of the dresser stood another masked figure, eagerly raking off the articles of jewelry which the old man had placed there on retiring.

The thief's hand was for an instant clearly outlined against the pure white marble of the dresser.

In a second the light went out, and the place was in darkness once more.

Nick sprang toward the door.

His purpose now was to reach the stair-way below before the burglars descended, and there arrest them both.

As he sprang through the bath-room door he felt himself seized from behind.

The detective had never before met a strength equal to his own.

He tried to dash his assailant aside, but found that he could not do so.

He tried to bring his revolver to bear, but his arms were bound to his sides by that terrible grasp.

He raised his feet from the floor, and threw his whole weight downward, thinking that a roll and a struggle on the carpet might break the other's hold.

The two men went to the floor together.

Nick fell on top, but he could not hold the advantage for a single instant.

The next instant he realized that he was fighting three men instead of one, and that they had him in their power.

He knew that he was being beaten about the head, and that a long-bladed knife was flashing before his eyes.

Then everything passed away, and he ceased to struggle.

CHAPTER VI.

CHICK GETS A DOSE, AND GOES TO SLEEP.

"If you get a hot foot after you, don't come here."

"No: the coppers have had pointers enough already."

"We may come back if we get the boodle and come out all right, though?"

Grove asked the question in a sneering tone.

"As you choose."

Then Chick heard Grove and Nixon leaving the place, and heard Gilmore and Geary go up the cellar stairs.

He was practically alone in the cellar.

The man he had overpowered on entering lay unconscious by the bank vault.

"I got him through that partition just in time," thought the detective, as he peered through the broken cellar wall, "for they would have hunted the place over until they found me had they seen their chum lying there."

According to instructions Chick had slipped into the cellar during the fight in the dining-room.

At first he thought himself alone in the place.

It was only when he passed through the door in the double wall, on the approach of the men from up stairs, that he realized that the gang had left a watchman there.

While Gilmore and Geary were talking on one side of the wall the watchman and Chick were fighting desperately on the other side.

If Gilmore had remained in the cellar Chick would certainly have been discovered.

As it was the four men, after the arrival of Grove and Nixon, coolly planned the burglary on Forty-third street, and then left the cellar.

Chick knew that Nick Carter would follow any one leaving the place that night, and that he would be likely to have something to say about the affair on the South Side.

He fairly ached to be with him.

He did not like the idea of being shut up in the damp cellar all night, and then having to fight his way out in the morning.

He reasoned in this way:

"I have found out all I can about the place.

"I have seen the electric motor.

"I have seen the broken cellar wall.

"I have seen the unprotected granite wall of the bank.

"Why not get out and follow Nick?"

But what should he do with the captured watchman?

He would not remain unconscious long.

The burglars must not know that the detectives had discovered their plot.

He finally handcuffed the fellow's hands behind his back, tied his ankles together, gagged him, and prepared to leave the cellar.

Then a new difficulty presented itself.

The door in the double wall was fastened on the street side.

It would take a long time to cut through it with such tools as the detective had.

He must pass out, if at all, through the chop house.

After some little delay he crept to the head of the stairs, and listened.

Gilmore and Geary were still in the place.

He could hear them talking in subdued tones.

The lights were out in the dining-room, and the place was evidently closed for the night.

They were waiting for the return of Grove and Nixon.

Chick tried the knob of the cellar door.

It turned easily, and the door opened without noise.

It was very dark in that part of the room, and the detective ventured forth.

He had hardly closed the door behind himself when Gilmore sprang to his feet with an oath, and lit the gas.

"What's up?" asked Geary.

"We're a couple of fools."

"Well?"

"Did you see the watchman down there?"

"Didn't know there was one."

"Well, there was."

"Where was he when we were there?"

"That's just what I'd like to know."

"Probably off or a drunk," suggested Geary.

"Not much."

"Then he's out his lucky."

"No; he's been nipped," said Gilmore. "I thought all along that there was something wrong down there."

Geary laughed.

"I never saw you act as you are acting to-night," he said. "What has got into you?"

"I tell you that there is something wrong in the cellar." "Well," said Geary, "then we'd better go down and make it right."

He lit a candle as he spoke.

Gilmore reached up to turn off the gas.

His companion caught him by the arm.

"Wait," he said, in a whisper.

"What is it?"

"There's some one in the room."

Two revolvers flashed in the light.

Chick was in a tight place.

"I'll stand here with my gun," said Gilmore, "and you light all the gas-jets in the room. Then we can see to kill the spy."

Geary set about obeying orders.

In another moment the place where Chick stood would be as light as day.

Then both burglars would begin shooting at him.

They would take any chance rather than allow him to escape after having gained admission to the cellar.

Chick moved cautiously toward the cellar door.

As he did so a bullet grazed his hat.

He sprang for an instant into full view, and darted down the stairs, followed by half a dozen bullets.

Gilmore was fairly white with rage.

"He must have been down there all the time," he said.

"And heard the plans laid for the burglary," added Geary.

There was a moment's silence, during which both men took good care to keep out of range of the cellar door.

"He might shoot," suggested Gilmore, pointing toward the dark opening through which Chick had disappeared.

"Of course he'll shoot."

Geary was not in a consoling mood.

"What is to be done?" asked Gilmore.

"Blessed if I know."

"Think. I can't."

"Can he get out?"

"Only by passing through this room."

"The door in the double wall."

"Is fastened on the street side."

"Then let him stay there until Grove and Nixon come back."

"And a great roast they'll have on us."

Gilmore was becoming decidedly savage.

Geary did not take the matter so much to heart. He was sure that it would all come out right in the end.

"Let them roast if they want to," said the latter.

"I won't have it."

"Well?"

"I'm going down there."

Gilmore pointed to the cellar as he spoke.

"You'll get your head shot off if you do."

"I don't care. I won't have this scheme ruined now," said Gilmore with an oath.

Geary pondered a moment.

"You might go down the front way," he suggested,

"and get a shot at the fellow through the door."

"Just the thing."

When Gilmore reached the street door he saw a man waiting there, and looking through the glass panel as he waited.

The door was hastily unlocked, and the man stepped inside.

"What's going on here?" he asked.

"The devil is to pay."

"Then pay him, if you can find a member of your crowd that has a soul. I understand that the gentleman you name has a liking for souls, my friend."

The new-comer was tall and slender, with sharp eyes and very glossy black whisker, which clung close to a very white face.

He was an important personage in the electric drill combination, having supplied most of the money with which to equip the chop house and purchase the machinery.

"You will have your joke," growled Gilmore.

"Anything new from the South Side?" asked the new-comer, who was a doctor by profession, and always smelled of drugs.

"Grove and Nixon are still there," was the reply.
 "Did they get away from here without being followed?"
 "I think so."

Gilmore locked the door again, and the two men joined Geary in the back end of the room.

"Tell me what's up," said the doctor, looking from one man to the other in amazement.

In a moment more it all came out.

A detective had found his way into the cellar.

The doctor cursed until the air was almost blue.

Chick, peeping from the head of the stairs, heard it all, and rather enjoyed it.

"Why haven't you been doing something?" demanded the doctor. "For all you know the fellow may be out in the street and half-way to police headquarters now."

"He can't get out. The door in the wall is fastened from the street side."

It was Geary who spoke.

The doctor glanced at him for an instant, and then said:

"An hour ago you would have told me that he could not get into the cellar at all. Go to the street, and watch the front door."

Geary departed without saying a word.

Then the doctor turned to Gilmore.

"Isn't it about time the boys were back from Forty-third street?" he asked.

"I think not," was the reply. "Have you any fears as to the result down there?"

"None whatever," was the answer. "Even if Grove and Nixon made a mess of it my roommate will straighten them out."

"He will be there, of course?"

"Yes."

"In the flat across the air shaft?"

"Didn't we rent it for this special occasion?"

The men conversed for some moments in whispers, and then the doctor crept cautiously to the head of the stairs.

"He is still there," he whispered back, in a moment.

"In the rear room?"

"Yes."

"Then throw your stuff."

The doctor drew away from the door-way for a second, and took a little round white substance from his pocket.

"You can't use the place to-morrow," he said, warningly, as he for a moment held the ball suspended in the air between his thumb and fore finger.

"What is it?" asked Gilmore.

"Something made for just such places," was the reply.

"It is a Chinese stink-pot in a modified form."

"Will it produce death?"

"Not at once, but it will make a man lay like a corpse for twelve hours. Then, if restoratives are not applied, death results."

"Throw it."

Chick heard something drop almost at his feet.

Then came an explosion, followed by a horrible, choking odor.

Chick tried to breathe, but found it impossible. He felt himself falling, and heard a strange rushing sound in his ears.

CHAPTER VII.

WHAT THE WINDOW PANE REVEALED.

"There's a dead man down there."

"Down where?"

"In the doctor's flat."

The man living in the flat above the one where Nick Carter had been assaulted looked up from the morning paper.

"How do you know?" he asked.

The wife gave a little shiver as she answered:

"I saw it."

The head of the family laid down the paper.

"When?" he asked.

"When I got up," began the woman, "I stepped to the window looking into the air shaft. I did not sleep well last night, on account of the noise down there, and I thought I would see if everything there looked as usual."

"Well?"

"Of course I couldn't see into the rooms under us, so I turned my attention to the rooms on the other side of the shaft."

"How slow you are. Go on."

"Well, a heavy black curtain hung over the opposite windows, making an almost perfect mirror of the plate glass in the sash."

"Well—well?"

"And there, in that mirror, I saw the body of a dead man lying in the back parlor of the doctor's flat."

"Was the doctor there?"

"Yes."

"Alone?"

"Yes."

"What was he doing—preparing to cut up the body?"

"No; he was cleaning up blood."

The head of the house resumed his paper for a moment and then laid it down again.

"Why didn't you tell me of this before?" he asked.

"Oh, I thought it merely a freak of the doctor's."

"What noises did you hear down there last night?"

"You are not in court now," said the woman with a laugh. "I don't know as I can describe the noises I heard. There were blows and the sound of scuffling."

The man of the house walked to the hall door, and opened it.

"I wonder if the doctor is there yet?" he asked.

"He went away an hour ago," was the reply.

The man went down and tried the door.

It was locked, and no one answered his call.

"He's gone, all right enough," said the man, going up stairs again, "and I'm going to have a look into that room."

"You have no right——"

"Oh, yes, I have, my dear. The law gives me a right to go anywhere I believe a crime is being committed."

"Will the law heal your head if you get it hit?" asked the wife, anxiously.

"I'll look out for that," was the reply.

"But the door is locked, and you can't get in."

"I'll look out for that, too."

The head of the house got his wife's clothes-line down, and raised the window opening on the air shaft.

The flat straight across was unoccupied, and the heavy curtains which had revealed so much still hung across the windows in the flat below, so there was no danger of making a scene.

The man swung himself down, and landed on the heavy ground glass at the bottom of the shaft.

The window was fastened, and heavy curtains had been drawn across the panes, but the investigator, by the exertion of all his strength, forced the sash up, and looked inside the room.

The man he saw lying there on the carpet was bound, and gagged, and bloody, but he was not dead.

"Help me out of this," his eyes said, as plainly as words could have done.

The man removed the gag, and stood looking down at him.

"How did you come here?" he asked.

"I didn't get into this shape for the fun of it," was the reply. "Take these things off before those men come back."

"Who are you?"

Nick nodded his chin toward an inside pocket.

"You wouldn't believe me if I told you," he said, "so you may look at my credentials."

The man did look, and in about a second after he had done looking Nick Carter was free of all bonds, and on his way to the flat above.

It took but a few moments for the detective to explain all that had taken place in the building the previous night.

Nick was not seriously injured.

A weaker man would have been laid up for days from the effects of the bruises he had received, but Nick had too much work to do to think of going to bed at all.

He washed and dressed his wounds as best he could, partook of a light breakfast, and then asked the man who had rescued him to inform the officer on the beat below

that something unusual had taken place in the old man's flat the night before.

"That will place the matter in the hands of the police," he said. "I don't want to take a hand in it just yet."

The man soon came back, and reported that the policeman had broken in the door, and found the old man lying bound and gagged on the bed. A large amount of money and some valuable jewelry had been taken.

"And you have the clew?" said the man, inquiringly.

"Yes, but I can't give it now. I want to have another interview with those people down stairs before the officers get hold of them."

"And they are in with the burglars?"

"It seems so. How long have they lived there?"

"About two weeks."

"It is a part of the electric drill scheme," said Nick.

"What's that?"

"I was thinking aloud."

"But you spoke of an electric drill."

"Yes."

Nick Carter, for once, had been caught napping. He had spoken when he should have remained silent.

"That makes me think," continued the man, "that the two doctors down stairs are cranks on electricity."

"What do they do with electricity?"

"They have a motor down there, and they have been drilling all sorts of substances."

"How long has this been going on?"

"Ever since they have lived there."

Nick thought of the armature he had found in the rooms below not long before, and remained silent.

"Now," said the detective, "I want to be back in that room when the doctors return, and I want you within reach in case I should need help. What do you say to that?"

"All right. I am dying for a scrap, anyway."

The two men descended to the lower flat, and Nick was placed in the shape in which he had been left.

The gag was in his mouth, and the ropes were on his wrists and ankles, but they were fixed so that they could be cast aside at any moment.

Nick's companion secreted himself in a huge wardrobe in the room.

Ten minutes the door was unlocked from the outside, and two men entered, only one of whom the detective knew.

One was the man who had attacked Nick, and the other was the man who had thrown the poisonous ball at Chick in the cellar of the chop house.

"It worked like a charm," the latter was saying. "The spy keeled over in a second, and you ought to see, the stuff we got out of his clothes."

"Money?"

"Yes, money and disguises and letters of introduction. He'll make an excellent subject for the dissecting table in a day or two."

Nick trembled, for he knew that they were talking about Chick.

"Is he dead?"

"No, but you know that he will die if restoratives are not applied inside of twelve hours."

"The twelve hours will be up at two o'clock this afternoon?"

"Yes."

"And then?"

"Why, we'll cut him up—in the interest of science, of course."

The doctor laughed brutally as he spoke.

"How's the chop house to-day?" asked the other.

"It stinks."

"Closed up?"

"Tight as a drum."

"The cellar is being worked, I suppose?"

"Yes, the boys are all at work except the watchman. Chick came so near killing. He's gone to bed."

"Things must be about ready down there?"

"The drilling begins to-night."

Nick thought he heard a faint exclamation from the direction of the wardrobe.

One of the doctors also heard the noise.

"What's that?" he asked.

His companion made no reply, but stepped up to the place where the detective was lying.

"See here," he said, "your friend is awake."

The other advanced, and removed the gag.

"You might have done it yourself," he said, addressing Nick, "it's loose enough."

"How do you like your quarters?" asked the other doctor.

"Not very well," was the reply.

"You heard what we have been saying?"

"Yes."

"How do you like the fate in store for Chick?"

"He's not dead yet," replied Nick.

"You have an idea that you'll both get away?"

"Of course."

"Well, you'll both be on the dissecting table in twenty-four hours. You'll make good subjects, too."

"Put me in a chair," said the detective. "The floor is like a rock."

The doctors lifted him up.

"You have only a short time to live," one of them said, "and we may as well make you comfortable."

The next moment one of the ruffians stood before the detective with a rag saturated with ether.

"It's time to put you to sleep," he said. "You'll wake up in a place where you won't need an overcoat."

The instant the muscular doctor came within reach Nick sprang to his feet, and struck out with his right, throwing all the strength of his strong arm and all the weight of his body into the blow.

The doctor caught the blow under the ear, and went to the floor like a dead man.

Then the door of the wardrobe was thrown open, and Nick's rescuer dashed out.

The other doctor sprang for the door, but the man from the wardrobe got there first.

In a moment the doctor was thrown to the floor, and handcuffed.

But although captured the fellow was not conquered.

"There's one sure thing," he said, "and that is that you can't save Chick. He's got a dose that will finish him."

"All right," said Nick, coolly, "I can get another assistant, but you can't get another neck after the law gets done with the one you have."

"Will the charge against me be murder?"

"Certainly."

"Is that other chap asleep?"

"Yes."

"Then I want to talk to you alone."

Nick motioned to his friend to step outside.

The next moment there was a sharp report, and a terrible odor crept into the room. The doctor had thrown another poison ball.

CHAPTER VIII.

NIXON DECIDES TO SEE CHICK CUT UP.

"There! You may set the electric drill in motion to-night, or as soon as you please."

Nixon stood by a basin of water in the cellar, washing his hands.

Gilmore and Geary, with smiling faces, stood near the break in the cellar wall.

"The three million dollars are almost within reach," said the latter, "and then here's one man for Europe."

"What's that for?" asked Gilmore.

"It's safer over there."

Gilmore lit a cigar, and handed one to his companion.

"It's safe enough anywhere now," he said.

"What makes you think so?"

"Haven't we got rid of Nick Carter and Chick?"

Geary looked doubtful for a moment.

"They are out of the way for the present," he said, seeing that Gilmore expected him to say something.

"Do you think they will get away?" demanded Gilmore.

"I'm afraid they will."

Gilmore took the candle in his hand and walked through the break in the cellar wall.

Turning to the right he faced toward the rear of the

bank vault, and lifted the flashing candle above his head.

"There," he said, "do you see anything there?"

As he spoke he pointed to the figure of a man lying on the floor.

"Yes."

"Does it look as if he'd get away?"

"Hardly."

"Do you think the doctors will allow Nick to escape?"

"No."

"Of course not. They want him to cut up too much for that. Don't you think so?"

"What you say is all true," said Geary, "but for all that you may rest assured that we are not through with Nick Carter yet."

As he spoke Geary and Gilmore felt a hand laid on their shoulders.

Eack gave a start of surprise.

The doctor stood before them.

"My friend Chick seems to be behaving himself," he said, with a smile.

"What brings you back here at this time?" asked Gilmore.

"Restlessness."

"How did you leave our friend Nick Carter?" asked Geary.

"A trifle under the weather."

"Conscious?"

"Yes."

"Then look out for him."

"He's in good hands," replied the doctor.

"Where's Richard?" asked Gilmore.

"At the rooms. He won't be down to-day."

"What?"

"He won't be down until evening."

"What are you down for? We shall have a hard night of it."

"I want to get this young man away."

"What young man?"

"Chick."

Gilmore looked puzzled.

"I thought he was to remain here," he said.

"And have the officers find him with the broken vault in the morning? I should say not."

"Where do you want to take him?"

"To a place where we can cut him up, of course."

"That's the doctor of it," said Gilmore, with an oath.

Then Nixon stepped back to where the three men were talking.

"Are you going to cut Nick Carter up, too?" he asked.

"Of course."

"Who let you in?" asked Nixon.

"The fellow at the door."

"He was there when you came in, then?"

"Yes, and he made a kick about letting me in. He said something about the word having been changed."

"He must have been drunk," said Gilmore, "for the word has not been changed."

"Well," said Nixon, "the fellow has disappeared."

The doctor appeared to be very angry.

"You will spoil the whole scheme by putting such men on guard," he said, "and at this critical time, too."

"I'll run that door myself after this," said Nixon, "or at least until the drill starts."

The doctor stepped forward, and bent over the still figure lying in the corner by the bank vault.

"He's about gone," he said. "We must get him out of this before he dies."

"Why so?"

"Because you can take an unconscious man through the streets very easily, but you can't stir with a dead one."

"You are right about that," said Geary. "I have tried both."

"How are you going to get him away?" asked Gilmore.

"In a carriage, I suppose."

"Well, call one, then, and let's have done with the affair for good and all."

Geary went out to call a carriage "for a sick man," and the doctor went back to the motionless figure by the vault.

Gilmore watched him closely.

Finally he saw him take a bottle from his pocket, and press it to Chick's lips.

"What are you doing?" he demanded.

"Trying to get rid of this accursed smell," was the cool reply.

"I wish you could take the stink out of the rooms up stairs," said Gilmore.

"You won't want the rooms to-morrow," was the reply.

"I hope not."

Then Nixon came back and announced that the carriage was waiting.

The doctor and Nixon took Chick by the feet and shoulders, and carried him to the street door of the chop house.

Then Gilmore called Nixon to the back end of the room, to a place where the doctor could not overhear what was being said.

"What do you think of this?" he asked.

"Of what?"

"Taking Chick away."

"I don't like it."

"Well," said Gilmore, with an oath, "I don't like it, either. The little devil may escape."

"Then don't let him go."

"But the doctor wants him."

"Curse the doctor."

"He's been a good producer, Nixon," said Gilmore.

"Yes, and has allowed us to do all work and assume all the risks. Where was he last night when we were out there to his block? He ought to have been on deck then."

"I know it, old man."

Nixon chewed the end of his cigar, and looked ugly.

"I'll tell you what it is," he said in a moment. "I won't leave this young man Chick until I see the knife sticking into him."

"I was about to suggest that."

"I've had enough of this monkey work with Nick Carter and his gang," continued the burglar. "I have had Nick and Chick in my power before to-night, and they have always escaped through some soft-heartedness on the part of some member of the party. That don't happen this time."

Gilmore seemed greatly pleased.

"You stick to that kind of talk regarding detectives," he said, "and you'll wear diamonds."

Nixon turned away toward the door.

"Remember," Gilmore whispered in his ear, "any knife will do as well as a surgeon's knife."

The doctor, standing at the street door with his hand on the knob, heard the words, and gave a sudden start.

"Hurry," he said when Nixon came up, "help me into the carriage with this sick man, and then you can run the place to suit yourself for a little while, but I advise you to keep a closer watch on the door opening on the street."

"I'm going with you."

Nixon spoke half angrily.

"Oh, you are?"

There was something so peculiar in the doctor's tone that the burglar looked up with a start.

"That's orders."

"From whom?"

"Gilmore."

"Very well. Come along."

He takes it mighty cool," thought Nixon. But then he could not see the doctor's face from where he was standing.

Chick was placed in the carriage without difficulty, and then the doctor stepped forward to give the driver his orders.

When he got back to the carriage door Nixon was leaning over the still figure of the detective.

He held a wicked-looking knife in his hand, and seemed about to strike.

The doctor caught his arm.

"Don't make a muss in the carriage," he said, coolly.

With an oath Nixon threw himself into the front seat of the carriage, and folded his arms.

"Keep me away from him, then," he said. "I shall not wait for the drug if I get another chance."

The doctor pointed out to the crowded streets.

"See the risk you would run," he said. The carriage drove straight to the Windsor Hotel. Nixon glared about in a suspicious manner, but helped to carry the unconscious man to a room on the second floor without making any remarks.

He cursed and swore at the crowd which gathered around the stair-way when Chick was taken from the vehicle, but said nothing to his companion until the door of the room was closed behind them.

"What does this mean?" he then demanded.

He spoke with his hand on the handle of a revolver, but before he could draw it the doctor had him covered.

"It means," was the calm reply, "that you are under arrest. Throw up your hands."

"You are joking, doctor."

The "doctor's" false beard and wig were off in an instant, and Nick Carter stood revealed.

Regardless of the weapon held within an inch of his face Nixon, wild with rage, sprang at the detective.

Nick did not care to use his revolver, and so attract the attention of the police and the people in the house.

He grappled with his assailant, and the two men rolled on the carpet together.

Nixon was a muscular fellow, and he now fought with all the cunning and all the fierce strength of a maniac.

He had a knife in his possession, and he exerted himself to the utmost to bring it into use.

Nick knew the danger he was in, and tried hard to bring the fight to a sudden close.

Not only his own life, but that of his assistant also depended upon his exertions.

In a moment the struggling men heard steps in the hall, and then the door of the room was thrown open.

Nick expected that the intruder was an employee of the hotel.

Nixon was afraid it was an officer.

It was neither.

It was one of the toughs who had attacked Chick the previous night in the chop house.

Gilmore had ordered him to follow the carriage.

Nick sprang to his feet, and drew his revolver.

With grins of triumph Nixon and the thug advanced upon him.

"We've got you at last," hissed the former.

CHAPTER IX.

HOW THE ELECTRIC DRILL WORKED.

"The electric drill ought to be working by this time,"

Chester Smith, the wealthy banker, Nick Carter, Chick, and two detectives from the city force sat in a room not far from the chop house.

It was nearly midnight, and they had been waiting there two hours.

"It beats anything I ever heard of," said the banker.

"When burglars took money from under my pillow, stole my revolver, cooked a breakfast in my kitchen, tapped my wine, and left an explanatory tag tied to my dog's tail, I thought the limit of audacity had been reached; but this robbing a bank by machinery throws all that in the shade."

The detectives laughed heartily at the banker's account of the burglars' visit to his residence.

Then Chick turned to his chief.

"I'd like to know," he said, "how you got that make-up from the doctor, and how you knew what drug to use in order to help me back to life."

"Why," said Nick, "the fool of a doctor tried to catch me by giving me a dose of the same medicine he gave you. I got out of the room mighty quick and shut the door."

"And he had to take the dose himself?"

"Exactly. Well, the ball wasn't very strong, and when I went back into the room the fellow was still conscious, although lacking the power of motion."

"That's the way I felt at first."

"He motioned for me to take a bottle out of his pocket and give him some of its contents. I did so, and he was

soon on his feet. So you see I had the remedy right in my own hands. As for the doctor's rig, I made him give that up at the police station."

"It was a perfect fit," laughed Chick. "How Nixon started when you threw it off."

"You were conscious at that time?"

"Of course. I began to recover the instant you gave me the antidote, but I didn't want those fellows to catch on. I guess Nixon had an idea that I was as good as dead. When I sprang from the bed and got him by the neck he acted as if he had seen a ghost."

"You saved my life there," said Nick. "I couldn't have fought another round."

One of the detectives who stood by the window now turned toward the little group.

"It's time to go," he said. "The lights are out in the chop house and the drill must be going."

"They are two hours late now," said Nick, "but they may be waiting for Nixon and the two doctors."

"They'll have to wait a long time," said Chick.

The two detectives, Nick and Chick, now left the room and walked down to the chop house, where they stopped.

The grinding of the electric drill could very plainly be heard.

The city detectives went to the front door of the restaurant, while Nick and his assistant crept down the area in front.

As they expected, the door in the double partition was securely fastened on both sides.

They waited a few moments for the city officers to make their presence known, but the work on the other side of the double wall went on as if there were no officers within a thousand miles.

"Stay here and guard this door," said Nick "and I'll go around and see what's the matter."

The detective found the door of the chop house open, and understood that the city officers were on the inside.

He entered and walked along through the dark room until he came to the door leading to the basement.

There he was met by a quick, sharp challenge.

"Who's there?"

The detective hesitated an instant and then answered: "Nixon."

His answer was followed by a sharp whistle, and then he heard a rush of feet and the sound of excited voices in the basement.

In an instant the detective realized what had happened.

The city officers had been overpowered by the burglars. The arrest of Nixon had in some way become known.

At this second invasion of the place the burglars were quitting their work.

Nick knew that if he effected the capture of the gang at all he must act at once, without waiting for assistance.

With a weapon in each hand he sprang toward the stairs.

The guard there fired one warning shot and retreated to the cellar.

In a moment Nick had confronted the burglars.

"Surrender!" he shouted: "I have a dozen officers at my back."

His only answer was several pistol-shots, but the bullets flew wide of their mark.

Then the outlaws rushed upon the detective.

Only one cowardly rascal turned to the door in the double wall to make his escape.

Busy as he was with the men about him, Nick could not help smiling when he saw the fellow unfastening the door.

He knew what would happen when he got it open.

Nick was now hard pressed, for the burglars were fighting for dear liberty.

He was in a fair way to get the worst of the encounter when the man at the door succeeded in getting it open, Chick having unfastened it from the other side.

As the burglar stepped into the opening, he met a hard, white hand which sent him back into the rear room.

Then Chick sprang through the door-way with a yell, and began striking right and left.

Seeing a man creeping up behind Nick with a knife in his hand, Chick drew his revolver and shot the fellow through the heart.

This ended the battle.

The burglars had no means of knowing how many more officers there were in the front cellar, and they did not like the shooting.

So they threw up their arms and surrendered.

Geary and Grove were the first men handcuffed.

Gilmore was nowhere in sight.

The two burglars raved like maniacs when they learned that the gang had surrendered to the two detectives who were supposed to be dead.

"Where's Gilmore?" asked Nick.

"Cut his lucky," said Grove.

"He went over the roof," said another prisoner, "and I hope you'll catch him. He cut without giving the warning signal."

Nick, leaving Chick to guard the prisoners, dashed through the chop house and up the stairs to the roof.

It was very dark, and at first he could see nothing.

Finally, however, he heard a noise on the roof of the next building, which was several feet lower than the roof of the one upon which the detective then stood.

He crept to the edge and looked down.

A figure stood on the wall at the rear, looking over an alley, at least twelve feet wide.

As the detective looked, the figure sprang into the air and landed on the other side.

It was a desperate act, but well carried out.

"Gilmore still has his old nerve," thought Nick. "I wonder if I could jump that alley?"

He could, and he did, but when he stood in safety on the other side Gilmore had disappeared.

Nick prowled around on the roof a long time, and was about to take his departure when a low cry of fright reached his ears.

He crept softly in the direction from which the sound had proceeded, and found a faint light shining through a skylight in the roof.

Looking down, he saw Gilmore standing by the side of a bed containing two young men.

He was evidently pleading with them for protection.

The burglar had been careful to replace the skylight after leaving the roof, and had drawn a table under the opening for the purpose.

Nick pushed the sash aside and dropped into the room.

One of the young men saw him, but Nick pointed to the badge on his vest and the fellow remained silent.

Before Gilmore knew that Nick was in the room the detective was upon him.

There was a short, sharp struggle, and then the most daring house and bank-breaker in the world lay handcuffed on the floor.

"What a bank-burglar you would have made," said Gilmore, as Nick sat down by his side for a moment's rest.

"Think so?"

"What have you done with Nixon, the two doctors and the door-keeper?" continued Gilmore.

"All locked up."

"And Chick?"

"Down stairs keeping cases on the gang."

"Are they all under arrest?"

"Every one."

"I suppose it was you that got Chick away?"

"Of course."

"Again I say what a bank-burglar you would have made."

There was no more sleep for the young men that night.

Before morning all their acquaintances knew that they had witnessed the capture of the notorious Gilmore by the famous Nick Carter.

Gilmore was in a great rage when, after being taken to police headquarters, he learned that the whole pull had been made by the two New York detectives.

"What became of the city officers?" he asked.

Geary grinned and pointed toward the old chop house cellar.

"You'll find them down there behind the bank vault," he said.

And there the officers were found nearly suffocated, and foaming with rage.

"It's just as I told you that night," said Gilmore, ad-

ressing Grove. "If you had stayed away from my place another week the electric drill scheme would have worked."

"I meant to stay away," said Grove, humbly.

"Then why didn't you do it?"

"Because I got hold of John Mitchell and tried to hold him up in his own house—that's why."

"I don't see what that has to do with it," said Nick.

"They got a good description of me there," was the reply, "and I had to go to Gilmore for money for a new rig. That's what knocked us all out."

"It's the little things that count in this world," said Nick, as he turned away.

The burglars all received long sentences, and the man and woman on Forty-third street who discovered Nick that morning were well rewarded.

The electric motor and the drill were taken from the cellar of the chop house, and Nick Carter takes great pride in exhibiting them to his friends.

After their arrest the two doctors were discovered to have been engaged in many crooked schemes, and the sentence they received for their connection with the drill conspiracy is not the last one they are likely to get.

Nick's reward from Banker Smith was a check for \$10,000.

[THE END.]

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